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S E C R E T LA PAZ 002168

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2018
TAGS: [AMER](#) [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: EAC RECOMMENDS EXTENDING AUTHORIZED DEPARTURE

REF: LA PAZ 2157 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: RSO Patrick J. Moore, reasons 1.4c,d

11. (C) The Emergency Action Committee (EAC, consisting of EXEC, RSO, CONS, MGT, ECOP, DEA, NAS, DAO, MILGRP, PAS, and others) met October 6 to discuss the current political situation and security planning. EAC agreed unanimously to recommend extending Authorized Departure due to President Evo Morales' call for protests surrounding the congress the week of October 13 and in light of the potential for demonstrations during "black October", particularly on October 17, when the anniversary of civic unrest leading to some sixty deaths prior to the resignation of ex-President Goni Sanchez de Lozada usually includes a march on the Embassy. RSO distributed updated plans for safehaven housing and plans for the immediate reactions needed in case of a low-probability but high-impact event such as an action against President Morales.

Morales Supporters Marching to La Paz 10/13-10/20

12. (C) Negotiations between the regional opposition prefects and the government have ended with no agreement, as was expected. President Morales still plans to have his Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) social groups march on La Paz October 13, for a siege of congress on October 15. EcoPol contacts suggest that the October 15 date may slip to October 20. Local sources are suggesting around 15,000 marchers. On October 17, a "massive rally" is planned in El Alto to commemorate ex-President Sanchez de Lozada's fall from power in 2003. Although no current intel suggests that the protests plan to target the Embassy, in the past the protests have included marches on the Embassy.

13. (C) The September 15 protest aimed at the Embassy was successfully managed by the Bolivian National Police, and the protesters never actually reached the Embassy building. In anticipation of the march, Charge had met with Foreign Minister on September 14, using the opportunity to remind the Bolivian government of their Vienna Convention responsibilities, and Government Minister Alfredo Rada made a public request that the social groups not protest because the Ambassador had already left the country. The successful police intervention in the face of a large group of marchers made clear that, if instructed by the government, the police are able to control fairly sizable demonstrations. Charge will again remind the government of its obligations to protect the mission should we get word that a demonstration against us is planned.

¶4. (C) RSO reports difficulty in arranging standard meetings with police contacts because of widespread fear that Government Minister Rada has informants in police offices; none wants to be perceived as being too close to Embassy officials. The contacts who will meet with RSO are currently predicting no violence aimed at the Embassy on October 17.

¶5. (C) The Bolivian government's reaction to our announcement that ATPDEA benefits would be suspended has been mild, and so far the Altenos who will lose their jobs are directing their anger at the Morales administration. While Morales could try to deflect blame towards the USG, his initial reaction has been to downplay the importance of ATPDEA and instead make promises that new markets will be explored for Bolivian products.

¶6. (C) If October 20 passes without significant incidents against U.S. interests, EAC will consider whether it would be appropriate to ask that Authorized Departure be lifted before the second thirty-day period expires.

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Santa Cruz Operations Update
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¶7. (C) A few NAS officials and the Peace Corps Director returned to Santa Cruz via commercial flights; DEA decided not to return any of its personnel because of Morales' refusal to allow DEA aircraft to fly from La Paz to Santa Cruz. DEA personnel have returned to Cochabamba

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Safehaven and Emergency Planning Update
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¶8. (S) There is some chatter among military contacts about a possible coup (such chatter has been common over many months), although DAO reports that there have been no troop movements. RSO distributed an updated plan for safehaven housing in the event of a high-impact, low-probability event such as President Morales' being removed from power, at it would likely prompt immediate anti-U.S. protests. In the event of a sudden crisis, the safehaven plan will help with accountability of personnel and evacuation. RSO also provided a new "0-72 Hour" reaction plan.

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EAC Recommends Extension of Authorized Departure
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¶9. (C) The EAC unanimously recommends to the Under Secretary for Management that Authorized Departure be extended for an additional thirty-day period. Should the situation warrant it after October 20, EAC will review whether to request that Authorized Departure be lifted before second thirty-day period expires. POCs are RSO Patrick Moore (moorepj@state.gov) and DRSO Daniel Hernandez (hernandezd@state.gov), IVG 547-8300.
URS